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DE RUEHGO #0084/01 0361037

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7129

INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE

RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0875

RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4435

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7966

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5527

RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3494

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1313

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000084

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/20/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM BM

SUBJECT: BURMA: SOME RELEASES, MORE ABUSES

REF: A. RANGOON 81

1B. RANGOON 41

1C. 07 RANGOON 780

1D. RANGOON 17

1E. 07 RANGOON 1178

Classified By: Pol Officer Sean O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) On February 4 authorities released two Rangoon-based NLD youth activists after holding them for three days. Two men arrested on January 22 for staging a small demonstration in Rakhine State were also released, but they reported having been abused while in custody. Another protestor, arrested in August for staging a solo demonstration in front of our Embassy, has reportedly been transferred to solitary confinement. NLD Spokesman U Myint Thein arrived in Singapore to seek treatment for stomach cancer and is undergoing diagnostic tests.

ARRESTS, RELEASES, AND ABUSES

12. (C) Our contacts reported that authorities on February 4 released Ko Thi Han and Ko Htein Win, two NLD youth activists arrested on February 1. We are seeking to confirm the release of a third unnamed NLD youth activist. Leading 88 Generation Students activist Toe Kyaw Hlaing told us he spoke with the released activists yesterday and said they are in good health and spirits. They told him they were questioned during their detention but were generally treated well during their three days in custody. Opposition lawyer Aung Thein confirmed that the released activists reported seeing detained blogger Nay Phone Latt (aka Nay Myo Latt) (reftel A) in custody at the Ministry of Home Affairs offices in Rangoon. They did not have any additional information about his condition and authorities have still not acknowledged his arrest.

13. (C) NLD officials in Taunggok, Rakhine State, told us that Ko Than Htay and Ko Kalar Shay, the men arrested for staging a two-man protest on January 22, were released on the afternoon of February 5. However, both men reported having been physically abused during their 15 days in custody. The men alleged that police beat and kicked them during their

interrogations, but they were thankful to have suffered no permanent injuries. They were arrested on January 22 after they rode their bicycles through the streets of Taunggok, shouting for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners. Local NLD member Ni Ni May Myint noted that neither man was an NLD member nor known political activist, and commented that their arrest and abuse demonstrated how seriously authorities take the threat of any protest. On January 18, authorities in Taunggok thwarted a planned demonstration by approximately 150 persons in the central market (reftel B).

¶4. (C) Our contacts could not confirm media reports that U Ohn Than, the activist who staged a solo pro-democracy protest in front of the US Embassy in August (reftel C), had been placed in solitary confinement. However, both Myint Aye and Aung Thein said they believed the reports were likely true. Aung Thein added that authorities have not permitted U Ohn Than's family to visit him for at least one month and reminded us that police arrested his friend and NLD member Htet Wei at his trial on January 9 (reftel D).

U MYINT THEIN MEDICAL CONDITION

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¶5. (C) NLD Spokesman Nyan Win confirmed that his colleague and fellow party spokesman, U Myint Thein, arrived in Singapore to seek treatment for stomach cancer (reftel E). Although the media reported U Myint Thein's condition as critical, Nyan Win told us that doctors in Rangoon believed they had caught the cancer in its early stages and were optimistic that doctors in Singapore could treat him successfully. U Myint Thein was scheduled to undergo several tests today, including an endoscopy, after which doctors will

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know more about his condition and prognosis.

COMMENT

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¶6. (C) We do not consider the release of people who should never have been arrested as progress. More people continue to be arrested than are released. Many of those arrested are subject to abuse, even if they are later released. The crackdown on dissent continues.

VILLAROSA